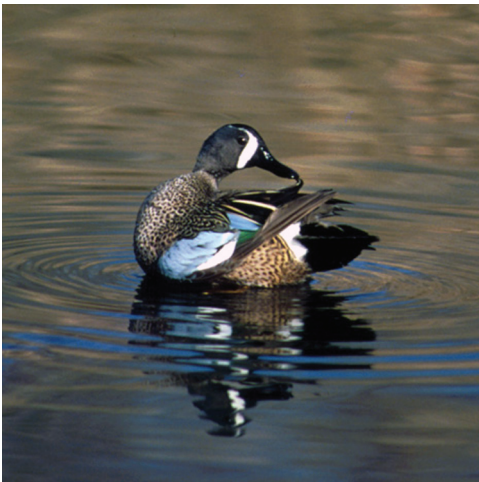




Prescribed Fire Maintains Native Grasslands in Upstate New York



White-tailed deer by USFWS.



Blue-winged teal drake by USFWS.

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem that revitalizes the landscape at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge in New York. Planned burns were used for centuries here by Native Americans to manage wildlife habitats. Fire remains a valuable tool today on this treasured landscape.

Some plant species growing here are fire-adapted and rely on fire for reproduction and survival. Warm-season grasses such as switchgrass, bluestem and indiangrass provide nesting habitat for migratory birds such as Savannah sparrows, bobolinks, Eastern meadowlarks, upland sandpipers and some species of waterfowl, such as mallards and blue-winged teal. During the winter, these grasses provide food for migratory songbirds such as American tree sparrows and cover for resident wildlife like white-tailed deer and foxes.

How Fire Helps

- Prescribed fire is used to control woody plants and non-native species such as honeysuckle and autumn olive. At the same time, fire helps return valuable nutrients to the soil and eliminates flammable, overgrown vegetation such as dried grass and other plant debris which can lead to wildfires.



Bobolink by USFWS.

Without Fire?

- The fire-adapted plants here would fail to thrive and could disappear from the refuge. Without fire to produce open areas for nesting, grassland nesting birds, many of which are rare in western New York, would disappear from the refuge.

Current Situation

- To keep grasslands open, the refuge must continue to employ a combination of mowing, spraying, haying and prescribed fire.
- Federal funding for reduction of hazardous vegetation is now focusing almost exclusively on areas other than the Northeast, with minimal emphasis on maintaining and restoring watersheds, wildlife habitats, natural ecosystems, or recovery of threatened and endangered species.

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